

Stephen Shrewsbury House
311 East Bay and Laurens Streets
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-258

HABS

SC

10 CHAR,

167

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

STEPHEN SHREWSBURY HOUSE

Address: 311 East Bay and Laurens Streets, Charleston,
Charleston County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Historic Charleston Foundation, 51 Meeting Street,
Charleston, South Carolina.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Not used--to be repaired and leased or sold for
residential purposes.

Statement of
Significance: A town house of the early 19th century with fine
architectural details.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

Originally owned by Stephen Shrewsbury [Register Mesne Conveyance Office, book B-7, p. 163], who purchased the lot from George Wolf (WoOLF). In 1815 his executor sold to Henrietta Campbell [RMC0, M-8, p. 277], who sold to James E. McPherson in 1817 [RMC0, S-8, p. 134]. McPherson descendants conveyed the property to Mrs. Liza Daggett in 1878 [RMC0, K-17, p. 460]. Acquired by Julian E. Smith and Helen E. Smith in 1952 [RMC0, Z-55, p. 515]. Purchased by the Historic Charleston Foundation (contract for sale, August 1962).

The building was erected by 1809; Stephen Shrewsbury was living in it that year [city Directory].

- B. Notes on Alterations and Additions: Observation of physical evidence indicates the addition of window cornices in the late 19th century and the enclosure of an area at the west end, probably once occupied by part of the piazza.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A house of a type very representative of Charleston, with fine details of the Adam style, largely preserved, with some superficial late 19th century additions.

2. Condition of fabric: The basic structure appears sound but the finish does not appear to have been maintained for sometime. The stair railing has lost most of its balusters.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: About 37' x 60'; three-and-a-half stories; faces south.
2. Foundations: The stuccoed brick walls continue to the ground without distinction.
3. Wall construction: Stucco over large brick laid in Flemish bond marked off to imitate stone jointing. An addition at the west end is of frame with clapboards. Some stucco has come off along the north side.
4. Porches and stoops: A two-story Charleston piazza extends along the south front, over an elliptical-arched brick basement several feet high. First and second stories are of wood, five bays, with slender solid columns having Greek Doric capitals and thin entablatures. Railings have turned balusters, only a few missing. Flooring of matched pine boards about 5-1/2" wide.

A wooden exterior stairway of relatively recent date is attached to the west end of the house; it is of no interest.

5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are on the north wall, flush with the wall, spaced to center on the main rooms; each has three flues with round chimney pots, which are not common in Charleston.
6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: On the east end, at the end of the piazza, is a simple wooden frontispiece entrance, set on one marble step above grade. Pilasters have simple capitals, with a cyma reversa molding topped by a fillet. There is a wide frieze and simple cornice. This frontispiece is set against narrow flush boards, laid horizontally. It may be somewhat later than the house, but appears to belong to the first half of the 19th century. Several wood steps lead up to the first floor of the piazza.

From the first floor of the piazza a central doorway forms the main entrance. In an elliptical opening is set a paneled door with fanlight and double-hung side lights (with panel below). There

are fluted colonnettes, the cornice has dentils and modillions, and the frieze is ornamented with swags in relief. A wide wooden archivolt, with dentils, is set inside the masonry arch.

At the second floor of the piazza is a very simple central doorway.

- b. Windows and shutters: Openings are rectangular; those under the piazza are simple, but the others have sheet metal cornices apparently added in the late 19th century. Sash are of wood, double hung. The third story windows retain six lights over six lights, but others now have single panes. Louvered shutters remain on the south first-story windows; stucco sills.

There are five bays along the south wall, three along the east. The north wall has only two windows--one at each stair landing.

- 7. Miscellaneous exterior trim: On the southeast corner is a pilaster which extends from grade to the cornice of the first story of the piazza. A paneled parapet crowns the top of the piazza on the east end.
- 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof, standing seam sheet metal covering.
 - b. Cornice: Three courses of brick, the middle ones set diagonally. A modern sheet metal gutter extends along the piazza cornice.
 - c. Dormers: One hipped dormer on east end, one on west end, three on south front.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Floors are similar--two main rooms with a central stair hall between and a piazza along the south side. At the northwest corner is a small original two-story wing. Along the west end is a three-story wooden wing of relatively modern date, which provides kitchens and bathrooms for apartment-house use.
- 2. Stairway: The stairway is of the open-well type, located at the north end of the hall. It has an open string with decorative brackets; there is a molded wooden handrail but only a few balusters remain.

3. Flooring: Longleaf yellow pine boards, about 6" wide.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, papered or painted. This has deteriorated in places.
5. Doorways and doors: Openings have wood architrave trim with reeding. Doors have six raised and fielded panels.
6. Trim: Wainscoting is of wood with raised and fielded panels. There are interior shutters with raised and fielded panels.
7. Finish in hall: In the first-floor entrance hall there is a plaster cornice with modillions and a ceiling centerpiece with acanthus leaves. The entrance has paneled pilasters and an entablature with dentils. Jambs and soffits of the side-light alcoves are paneled.
8. Mantel: In the drawing room, the west room on the second story, is a wooden mantel with reeded pilasters and entablature. The fireplace opening, now closed, is framed with marble, around which is a small carved wooden molding. The architrave is decorated with fluting. Blocks in the frieze over the pilasters are ornamented with an urn in each, in low relief. In the central block of the frieze is a group of relief figures; on the remainder of the frieze are remains of an anthemion and garland motive in low relief, of cast composition. The cornice consists of an ornamented bead, narrow cavetto, narrow ovolo, dentils, narrow cyma recta, projecting fascia, narrow ornamented cyma reversa and fillet.
9. Additional notes on room finish:
 - a. Ceiling heights are 11' on first and second floors, 8'-6" on the third floor.
 - b. East room on first floor: There is a heavy wooden mantel with two Greek Doric columns, obviously a replacement. The hall doorway has reeded architrave trim, over which is a frieze and cornice, ornamented in Adam style.
 - c. West room on first floor: There is an Adam mantel with ornamented frieze and paneled ornamented pilasters, a paneled wainscot and a plaster cornice.
 - d. East room on second floor: There is an ornamented Adam mantel with pilasters shaped like cabriole legs, paneled wainscot, reeded architrave trim on window openings and an ornamented Adam frieze and cornice over the hall doorway. A plaster cornice with relief ornament is an addition, probably mid-19th century.

- e. Third-floor rooms have paneled wainscoting, simple wooden mantels and no cornices.
- f. The attic has two small finished rooms with plaster walls and ceiling. Doors are of board and batten construction.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: This house is located on the northwest corner of East Bay and Laurens Streets. The street entrance is on the east end but the house really faces Laurens Street toward the south. The lot is not rectangular, since East Bay street intersects the others at an angle. This was formerly a residential neighborhood but in recent years it has been invaded by commercial and industrial activities, and East Bay street is now a busy artery of automobile traffic.
2. Enclosures: A brick and stucco wall, with coping, extends along the south lot line and part of the east line, where its upper portion has a simple iron fence. The house is built up to the east and north lot lines.
3. Outbuildings: A small brick two-story, five-bay building west of the house may have been a service building; at present it is a separate dwelling.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
July 1962, September 1963